

September 9, 2003

John E. Potter
Postmaster General
United States Postal Service
475 L'Enfant Plaza, SW
Washington, DC 20260

Dear Mr. Potter:

We have received your letter of August 27, 2003 responding to our letter of August 7 concerning the termination of postal police deployments at six major postal facilities. We are extremely disappointed that you did not directly respond to our specific request that you suspend the proposed terminations until a complete assessment is done of Postal Service security requirements – an assessment which you confirm in your response is tentatively scheduled to be completed in December. While your response did provide additional documentation we requested, as discussed briefly below, that information raises even more questions concerning the process used by the Postal Service to justify these terminations. Consequently, we once again request that you suspend the removal of postal police officers from these six facilities pending the completion of site-specific reviews of all affected facilities so that any changes in security force deployments can be based on a comprehensive analysis of the Postal Service's security needs.

As noted above, the detailed information you provided raises serious questions about the postal police redeployment decisions that have been made and the security policies the Postal Service is pursuing. In your response, you refer to previous security assessments that you believe confirm the recent surveys for the six facilities in question and the decision to terminate their security force deployments. The two national security force surveys you cite, in fact, appear to raise questions about the very decisions to terminate security forces you propose. For example, a central conclusion of the Hallcrest study you cite was the need to develop a "hybrid" security force including the retention of armed postal police officers for key assignments such as roving patrols and critical guard posts, including at the six locations in question. Similarly, the 2001 study did not recommend redeployment at all six sites. For example, citing the high crime area surrounding the Hartford facility, the study recommended against immediate redeployment at that site despite the presence of an access control system. And as we stated in our earlier letter, the 2001 study also identified systemic problems in some of the very systems that the Postal Service is promoting as an alternative to armed security officers, such as electronic access controls.

We also asked for prior security surveys of all of the affected facilities, which are supposed to have been prepared on a bi-annual basis, so we could determine current security conditions at all relevant postal facilities. It appears that these surveys have not historically been conducted on the required, bi-annual basis. While surveys were completed for the six facilities where you propose termination of the armed security force, they have not been completed for the remaining facilities. You stated that completion of new surveys of the remaining facilities is “tentatively” scheduled for December 2003. In the absence of a comprehensive understanding of Postal Service security needs, we continue to believe that it is premature to proceed with the planned terminations. Similarly, if the Inspection Service needs additional personnel to respond to new security challenges, it is not clear why the solution is not to hire the additional personnel necessary to respond to those needs rather than simply redeploying a dwindling number of armed security force personnel, including those currently protecting postal facilities and employees in acknowledged “high-crime” areas.

Finally, we have also learned that the Office of the Inspector General of the U.S. Postal Service (OIG) has concerns about the decisions being made with regard to redeployment and use of the security force and has begun a review of this matter. By separate correspondence, we are formally requesting that the Inspector General also examine the specific issues raised in our correspondence with you concerning redeployment of postal police officers. We expect the Postal and Inspection Services to cooperate fully with these Inspector General inquiries and to provide the OIG with the same material you have sent us.

In light of these factors, we once again request that you suspend termination of deployments of security force personnel at the six previously identified facilities. We look forward to your response to this request at your earliest convenience. Please feel free to contact Susan Propper of Senator Lieberman’s staff at (202) 224-2627 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman

Sen. Christopher J. Dodd

Sen. Maria Cantwell

Sen. Patty Murray

Rep. John B. Larson

Rep. Rosa L. DeLauro

cc: Lee R. Heath
Chief Postal Inspector

